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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 001537

SIPDIS

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TAGS: PGOV PHUM PINR PREL KIRF SOCI RS

SUBJECT: GOR WITHDRAWS FROM SCHNEERSOHN LEGAL PROCEEDINGS,  
CLAIMS SOVEREIGNTY

REF: A. MOSCOW 774

¶B. MOSCOW 282

Classified By: Acting Political Minister Counselor David Kostelancik for reason 1.4(b,d)

¶11. (C) On personal instructions from Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Acting Director for the North America Department Khudrin summoned us on June 11 and presented a note (scanned and emailed to EUR/RUS) that announced the GOR's withdrawal from United States court proceedings concerning the Schneersohn Collection. Khudrin explained that the GOR position regarding the Schneersohn Collection -- that it is a part of Russia's cultural heritage and has always been the property of the Russian government -- had not been respected, and that the United States court system "did not have proper jurisdiction" in this matter. Underscoring that the GOR's withdrawal did not equate to "shutting the door" on future legal proceedings, he suggested that the Chabad Lubavitch community could pursue legal recourse in the Russian court system to resolve the issue, since the Collection is located on Russian soil.

¶12. (C) Referring to the norms of international law, Khudrin stated that an internal act of any government cannot be considered the matter of legal investigation in the court of another country. He added that the GOR viewed the Schneersohn Collection as a matter of state sovereignty, and that it would not be subject to the rulings of American courts. As such, the GOR claimed immunity from any legal rulings made in the United States court systems. Embassy officials have been in continuous contact with GOR officials and Jewish community leaders on the status of the Schneersohn Collection prior to the GOR decision (reftels).

BEYRLE